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Carpet, tile, hardwood flooring, vinyl or linoleum, and other types of floor coverings are often used in residences and commercial buildings where comfort and appearance is important. Carpet, floor, and tile installers and finishers lay these floor coverings in homes, offices, hospitals, stores, restaurants, and many other types of buildings. Tile also is installed on walls and ceilings and is covered in the Tile Setters guide (see page).

Each specialty construction trade covered in this guide has its own methods of installation and many contractors only do one type of installation. Some install both carpet and vinyl floor coverings. However, laying hardwood floors is usually done by a specialist who works principally in laying wood floors.

Before any type of floor covering is applied, installers make sure the subfloor or other area to be covered is in good condition, level, and smooth. If holes and other irregularities are present, they must fill them in with patching or leveling compound. They may take out high spots in the surface by cutting them out or sanding them down. Some materials, such as old linoleum or vinyl floors, must never be sanded because they contain asbestos.

Once the floor area is smooth, they measure the area to be covered, and rough cut the carpet or vinyl to fit, leaving some overlap that will be cut away later. When applying a wood floor, a pattern must be chosen that will look attractive, satisfy the customer, and work well with the space available. When carpet is applied, a soft cushion of 'rebond' or other padding material is either stapled or glued down. Next, the carpet, vinyl, or wood flooring is laid down. Most carpet is attached through the use of tackless strips, which have been nailed to the floor beforehand to hold it in place.

Floor installers use hand tools such as hammers, drills, staple guns, carpet knives, linoleum knives, rubber mallets, power saws, trowels, utility knives, nail setters, and power nailers.

Tasks

- ▶ Apply adhesive cement to floor or wall and glue carpet or vinyl down.
- ▶ Cut covering and foundation materials, according to blueprints and sketches.
- ▶ Cut flooring material to fit around obstructions.

Floor Covering Installers

- ▶ Determine traffic areas and decide location of seams in both carpet and vinyl.
- ▶ Plan an attractive wood floor pattern that will fit the room well.
- ▶ Form a smooth foundation by stapling plywood or Masonite over the floor or by brushing waterproof compound onto surface and filling cracks with plaster, putty, or grout to seal pores.
- ▶ Heat and soften floor covering materials to patch cracks or fit floor coverings around irregular surfaces, using blowtorch.
- ▶ Inspect surface to be covered to ensure that it is firm and dry.
- ▶ Lay out, position, and apply shock-absorbing, sound-deadening, or decorative coverings to floors, walls, and cabinets, following guidelines to keep courses straight and create designs.
- ▶ Measure and mark guidelines on surfaces or foundations, using chalk lines and dividers.
- ▶ Remove excess cement to clean finished surface.

Detailed descriptions of these occupations may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ Installation — Installing equipment, machines, wiring, or programs to meet specifications.
- ▶ Mathematics — Using mathematics to solve problems.
- ▶ Equipment Selection — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- ▶ Manual Dexterity — The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
- ▶ Extent Flexibility — The ability to bend, stretch, twist, or reach with your body, arms, and/or legs.

Work Environment

Floor Covering Installers can work year-round since virtually all of their work is done inside a building. The floors in a building are usually one of the last things put into a building, so exposure to dust and other construction debris is usually not as much of a problem as with other construction trades. That's not to say that the jobsite is always comfortable. The building may not be heated or cooled, construction equipment can be noisy, and floors must be protected during and after installation from being damaged by other workers on site.

Shift work is not common in this occupation unless overtime is required to meet a deadline. Most Floor Covering Installers work a standard day shift. Some Floor Covering Installers are members of a labor union, however, most are not.

Floor Covering Installers

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupations across all industries.

| Standard Occupational Classification | Estimated Number of Workers 2004 | Estimated Number of Workers 2014 | Average Annual Openings | 2006 Wage Range (per hour) |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Floor Layers, Except Carpet, Wood and Hard Tiles | | | | |
| 47-2042 | 7,900 | 9,400 | 270 | \$13.11 to \$24.52 |
| Carpet Installers | | | | |
| 47-2041 | 22,800 | 26,700 | 750 | \$13.91 to \$25.39 |

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment for Floor Covering Installers will grow faster than average over the next few years. Carpets and other floor coverings are needed in both new construction and in remodeling projects so employment can remain stable even if the pace of new construction falls off a bit.

Modern consumers are demanding more choices in floor coverings than a decade or two ago. No longer are the choices between linoleum, hardwood flooring, or wall-to-wall carpeting. Now, some floors are covered with imported marble tiles, exotic hardwoods, or even prefabricated wood flooring systems. Some homeowners are choosing wood that has been salvaged from old barns or industrial buildings. Bamboo is also a recent choice in floor coverings; so is wood from palm trees. Even cork flooring is making a comeback. All of these choices open up more job possibilities for the skilled Floor Covering Installer.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Floor Covering Installers usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ▶ Formal, three to four-year apprenticeship
- ▶ Community college programs or certificates
- ▶ Vocational school
- ▶ Extensive on-the-job training

Many people learn the trade by working with a journey-level Floor Covering Installer on the job. They usually help out by carrying materials, mixing floor-leveling compound, or lugging buckets of adhesives to the job site. They also rip up old flooring materials, haul debris to be disposed, and prepare the surface before the installation of the new floor covering. They also clean up after the job is completed.

An apprenticeship program may be available in parts of California. These programs last three or four years. Information on apprenticeship programs can be found at www.dir.ca.gov.

Recommended High School Course Work

Most employers prefer applicants who have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. High school preparation should include courses in shop, basic mathematics, and English.

Floor Covering Installers

Where Do I Find the Job?

Applying directly to an employer is a good way of finding a job in this industry. Sometimes larger construction companies that specialize in remodeling will have openings. Union Floor Covering Installers can contact their local union hall for jobs that might be available.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following construction industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ▶ Floor Covering Stores
- ▶ Window Treatment Stores
- ▶ All Other Home Furnishing Stores

For local listings of contractors, search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ▶ Building Contractors, Commercial/Industrial
- ▶ Floor Refinishing
- ▶ Building Contractors, General
- ▶ Floor Resurfacing
- ▶ Carpeting
- ▶ Linoleum
- ▶ Floor Laying
- ▶ Wood Flooring

Where Can The Job Lead?

Beginning Floor Covering Installers can increase their income as their skills increase. Once they have proven themselves on the job, they can handle more responsibility and generally increase their productivity, which makes them more valued employees. However, because many employers are relatively small, promotional opportunities within a company may be limited.

Some Floor Covering Installers start their own businesses or become estimators, salespeople, or managers in larger companies.

Other Sources of Information

Floor Covering Installation Contractors Association
www.fcica.com

National Tile Contractors Association
www.tile-assn.com

California Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board
www.cslb.ca.gov

California Department of Industrial Relations
www.dir.ca.gov

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
www.iupat.org

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America
www.carpenters.org